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HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ATTLEBOROUGH :

DELIVERED AT ITS CENTENNIAL MEETING,

DECEMBER 7, 1848.

BY JONATHAN CRANE,
Pastor of the Church.

BOSTON :

DAMRELL & MOORE, PRINTERS.....16 DEVONSHIRE ST.
1849.

REV. JONATHAN CRANE,

Dear Sir,

The undersigned, Committee of Arrangements for the Celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of the SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN ATTLEBOROUGH, request for publication a copy of your interesting and valuable historical Discourse, delivered on that occasion.

PETER THACHER,
NOAH CLAFLIN,
PHINEAS SAVERY,
JESSE CARPENTER,
WILLARD BLACKINTON,
JOHN DAGGETT,
DANIEL WILMARTH,
JESSE R. CARPENTER,
SAMUEL CARPENTER.

Attleborough, Jan. 10, 1849.

ATTLEBOROUGH, JAN. 30, 1849.

Gentlemen,

The Discourse, a copy of which you have asked for publication, was prepared at your request; and, therefore, if in your judgment it should be committed to the press, as a reminiscence of the day on which it was delivered, and a pledge of your interest in the subject discussed, I do not consider myself at liberty to refuse. The chief difficulty I experienced in its preparation, arose from the vast number of topics to be noticed; and, if many facts and incidents have been omitted, which others might judge would have been equally appropriate and desirable, the limits allotted to an ordinary discourse must be my apology.

With the earnest hope that the Church may be equally harmonious and prosperous for the century to come, having arrived, if possible, to a more eventful period in this world's history,

I would subscribe myself,

Yours,

Sincerely and truly,

JONATHAN CRANE.

Dea. PETER THACHER,

NOAH CLAFLIN, Esq.

Dr. P. SAVERY, and others,

} Committee.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

THEN HE REMEMBERED THE DAYS OF OLD, MOSES AND HIS PEOPLE. ISA. 63, 11.

AN acquaintance with the scenes and events of olden times, is usually considered as desirable, from the addition it makes to our stock of knowledge, and the means thereby furnished, to aid in the formation and adoption of just modes of thought, and correct principles of action. What may thus be said of the experience of former generations, generally, is peculiarly true of that period which children are expected to cherish with strong affection and regard, when the fathers were the actors, furnishing examples for their imitation and adoption, and their tastes, habits, and modes of action were receiving a moulding impression from others.

In order, however, to a just appreciation and intelligent adoption of parental example, it is necessary that the motives which governed, and the principles that controlled, should be distinctly perceived and understood, and a correct estimate of its precise value and worth be formed from a knowledge of its nature, extent, and results.

This is the work to which the present occasion invites us. Having received our ecclesiastical rules, customs and modes of religious faith from the founders of our churches, we would learn their utility, wisdom and design, for higher and nobler purposes than the mere indulgence of an idle curiosity or the gratification of foolish pride and vain glory.

In addition to the manifest propriety and utility of the object which the present services contemplate, reference may be made to the words of our text, as containing a sufficient scriptural warrant for the end, which the exercises of this day are designed to secure. If a secret suspicion should lurk in the breast of any one, that a desire to learn the virtues and revere the memory of an honored ancestry, savors of the spirit which our Saviour condemned, when he said, "ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous," let it be banished; for, unlike the Jews, those to whom the present occasion appeals with the deepest interest, are the descendants of the men whose virtues they would extol, and thus they are witnesses for, and not against themselves.

The subject selected as the topic of remark in this discourse, is the origin, history, and influence of the Church of Christ in this parish, and only a brief sketch of some prominent particulars will be attempted.

The 30th of Nov., 1848, old style, commenced the second century of the Second Congregational Church in this town, and, short as that period is, she has outlived all those who were inhabitants of the town at the time of her organization, while her affairs have been conducted, and her ordinances administered, by successive generations of officers and members. Upon the 30th of Nov., 1748, this Church was constituted, by Rev. Mr. Leonard, pastor of the First Congregational Church at Plymouth, as the organ of an Ecclesiastical Council, called for that purpose, being a colony from the First Congregational Church in this town, then under the pastoral care of Rev. Habijah Weld, its honored pastor, almost fifty-five years.

The organization was attended with the utmost harmony and kind feeling, on the part of those who removed their relation from the First Church, and those who remained. Perhaps to this fact is the parish indebted for that harmony and unanimity, which have

always characterized its ecclesiastical affairs; for, to its credit may it be said, that no record of any council can be found, except for the regular settlement and dismissal of its ministers, and no other ecclesiastical society has been formed within its limits, to occasion that jealousy which existed between Ephraim and Judah; an evil of so much mischief and guilt, that God promised as a special blessing, "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." The character of the motives which led to the formation of this Church may be judged from the letters, preserved in their original forms, asking for a dismissal, and the answers returned; the former signed by twenty-six males and twenty-four females—the latter signed by Rev. Mr. Weld, in behalf of the church. (A.)

The articles of faith then adopted, were those of the New-England confession, which, according to Mather, was made from that of the Savoy, in compliance with that at Westminster, and now remains in an abridged form for common use. This church, in her articles of faith, and by evidence from other sources, may claim a descent from the non-conformists, or Puritans of England, and thus possesses a pedigree which we would cherish and honor. According to record, it was a colony from the First Church in this town—which was formed by members from the First Congregational Church in Rehoboth, now Seekonk, and that church was a branch from the Congregational Church in Weymouth, under their pastor, Rev. Samuel Newman, the members of which, with the pastor, came from England previous to 1640, not twenty years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Concerning this Mr. Newman and his infant band, which formed the first settlement in Rehoboth, reference may be made to Mather and the historians of those times.

Says Mather, in his *Magnalia*—"The life of Mr. Samuel Newman commenced with the century now running. (1600) at Banbury, where he was born of a

family, more eminent and more ancient for the profession of the true Protestant religion, than most in the realm of England. After his parents, who had more piety and honesty than worldly greatness to signalize them, had bestowed a good education upon him, and after his abode in the University of Oxford had given more perfection to that education, he became an able minister of the New Testament. But being under the conscientious dispositions of real Christianity, which was then called Puritanism, the persecution from the prevailing hierarchy, whereto he therefore became obnoxious, deprived him of liberty for the peaceable exercise of his ministry. Whence it came to pass, that although he might otherwise have termed him a Presbyterian of one town by ordination, we must now call him an Evangelist of many through persecution; for the Episcopal molestations compelled him to no less than seven removes, and as many places may now claim the honor of his ministry, as there did for Homer's nativity. But an eighth remove, whereto a weariness of the former seven drove him, shall bury in silence the claims of all other places unto him; for after the year 1638, (in which year with many others, as excellent Christians as any breathing upon earth, he crossed the water to America,) he must be styled a New-England man."

The period above referred to was the one during which the hierarchy endeavored to crush and destroy pure religion by fines, imprisonment and death; and when the descendants of the Puritans recount the scenes of those times, they cannot be blamed if they are very jealous of any approaches to the old ecclesiastical system, under which those barbarities were allowed and practised. As a specimen of the evils to which Mr. Newman and kindred spirits were exposed when in England, let the following extract suffice.

Says one, speaking of those times,—

"Dr. Leighton, the father of the worthy Archbishop of the same name, was tried before Laud, for his nonconformity. At the instigation

of this furious prelate, this holy man was sentenced to be degraded from the ministry, to have his ears cut, his nose slit, to be branded in the face, to be whipped at the post, to stand in the pillory, to pay ten thousand pounds, and to suffer perpetual imprisonment. And when this terrible sentence was pronounced, Laud pulled off his hat and gave thanks to God, who had given him this victory over his enemies. A certain Mr. Hayden, having spoken from the pulpit against some severities of Laud, was sentenced by him to Bridewell, where he was whipped and kept to hard labor, then confined in a cold, dark hole during the whole winter, chained to a post in the middle of the room, with irons on his hands and feet, having no other food than bread and water, and no bed on which to lie, but a pad of straw."

More than two hundred years have rolled away since the first Church in Rehoboth was formed, and therefore, for the first settlers, may we claim the title of Pilgrim fathers, if they did not land directly at Plymouth. As an interesting historical fact, it may be mentioned, that the plantation for one or two years was independent of any jurisdiction. "It does not appear," says Hon. Mr. Baylies, "that any permission to settle here was sought, either of the jurisdiction of Plymouth, or of Massachusetts, although both colonies afterwards claimed Seekonk; but in 1645, it was received by Plymouth, and became the town of Rehoboth, a name derived from the scriptures, and selected by Mr. Newman." If other proof were needed, of a direct descent from the Puritans of England, it might be found in the general use of Christian names, derived from the scriptures, as Noah and Samuel, Nehemiah and Ezra, Elijah and Daniel, Amos and Obadiah, with others that were expressive of some Christian virtue or event, as Grace and Mercy, Silence and Content, Patience and Prudence, Experience and Deliverance, not to speak of others less common, as Wonderful, Freelove, Waitstill, &c. Such were the conscientious convictions of the Puritans, says Southey, that many of the clergy refused to baptize by any names which were not found in the scriptures, or were not expressive of some Christian virtue or event.

With articles of faith, that distinguished the early

Puritans, known as Calvinistic, and a Congregational form of church government, neither the original church in Rehoboth, nor any of the churches that have descended from her, have fallen away, or like some of the original churches in the old ten towns of Plymouth Colony, been left to adopt another faith, or embrace another gospel, than that known unto the fathers.

From such an ancestry, this church was organized under the pastoral care of Rev. Peter Thacher, with seventy-five members, forty-six of whom were from the First Church in this town, and the rest, with two or three exceptions, from the Church in Seekonk. While the nominal date of this Church is in 1748, yet a distinct parish was formed, and the regular worship of God established in 1743, five years previous, for which difference, a satisfactory reason is found upon the records of the Church; being caused principally by the death of Rev. Mr. Thacher's father, in Middleboro', and an unchristian separation, on the part of some of the members of the First Church. As proof of the Christian union, that existed between this and the First Church, the following extract from Rev. Mr. Thacher's sermon, at the funeral of Rev. Mr. Weld, may be quoted:—

“The most of the time, between August 20, 1743, and November 30, 1748, I stood in the relation of pastor elect, to the brethren and people of God, in the easterly part of Attleborough, and preached to them on other Sabbaths; yet with mutual consent, we all attended the Rev. Mr. Weld's meetings, the Sabbaths on which he administered the Lord's Supper. Indeed there was a charming unanimity, and charming administrations.”

The year 1743, in which this parish was formed, is memorable in the religious history of our country, especially of New England, for the great awakening, under Edwards and his cotemporaries. This town shared largely in that work, and a large proportion of the original members of this Church, were among its subjects. Within the three years that preceded the formation of this parish, the First

Church in this town, received 192 to her communion. To us it is gratifying to find the name of Habijah Weld, associated with a large number of Congregational ministers, assembled at Boston, July 7th, 1743, who gave their "testimony and advice, occasioned," as they said, "by the late happy revival of religion in many parts of the land."

This Church we regard as the product of the great awakening in 1740, and, born at a time of revivals, it has been her privilege and honor to enjoy repeated seasons of a refreshing from the presence of the Lord. This awakening brought into existence another Church in this town, with the name of the Separatists, over which Mr. Daniel Shepardson was ordained, Jan. 20th, 1747; and as the principle, for which those of that name were distinguished, was adopted by the First Church, and also by this, we may suppose that the separation might be called "sad and unchristian." Not only has a subscription to certain articles of faith been required as a condition of membership, but also a written narrative or relation of the evidences of the new birth, or Christian piety, which have been read to the congregation, at least two Sabbaths previous to the reception of the candidate, and have been preserved during the whole period with the records, giving proof of one regular, uniform course. The Church in Middleboro, with which the first pastor of this Church united, it is said, retains the same practice in common with us.

With such a view of the origin of this Church, we are prepared to notice some events in her history, as for a century, like a noble bark at sea, she has been borne onward by the waves, rather than engulfed and ruined. Formed soon after the bloody wars with the Indians, she passed through the American Revolution, and has witnessed a change almost miraculous, on the part of the colonies, a change from a state of colonial dependence, to that of an united, free and independent

republic ; from a condition of great poverty and depression, to one of comparative wealth, renown and honor. Some idea of the change in the comparative wealth of the people, may be formed from the alterations to which their houses of religious worship have been subject. In this parish, we do not learn that pews were provided for the accommodation of families, until the year 1780, when the room upon the floor was divided and sold, to pay the expense incurred for alterations and repairs, amounting, according to record, to £23,000 ; but as if to save their credit from a charge of wasteful extravagance, it is added, that “one silver dollar shall be received for seventy-two dollars of the old emission.”

Since the history of the Church is closely united with that of her pastors, it is proper they should be noticed jointly ; while with devout thanks to God, we would acknowledge our obligations to those who have aided in the compilation of tunes of music, in which the songs of Zion have been expressed, one of whom was a citizen of this town, and from whose book of music, used in the days of the fathers, our selection to day is taken,* and also to the composers of our psalms and hymns, among whom Dr. Watts stands first, and almost alone, for his psalms and hymns have been used, according to our best information, from the origin of the Church, and through them, he has spoken to the Protestant Churches of Christendom, though he has slept with the dead a century, having died Nov. 25, 1748.

Of the first pastor of this Church, much might be said, as an able and faithful minister of the New Testament. With his name first upon the catalogue of members, he gave to the Church a moulding, forming impression, and some of the results of his labors are we called to witness to-day.

* Joel Read, Esq., author of Read's Collection, and brother of Daniel Read, Esq., author of *Columbian Harmony*, &c.

Rev. Peter Thacher* descended from a pious and honored ancestry, as the son of Rev. Peter Thacher, of Middleborough, whose praise was among the Churches, grandson of Rev. Peter Thacher of Milton; great-grandson of Rev. Thomas Thacher, the first pastor of Old South Church, Boston; great-great-grandson of Rev. Peter Thacher of Salisbury, England, who was prevented from an emigration to this country, only by sickness in his family.

The descendant of such an honored ancestry, Mr. Thacher is the progenitor of a list, reaching now to the third and fourth generation of those who profess the same faith, and some of whom are called to preach the same precious gospel. It was ascertained, about ten years since, that of his direct descendants over fifteen years of age, numbering 142, at least 101 had been, or were members of Evangelical Churches. At the present time, it is our privilege to be able to state, that of his descendants there are three grand-sons in the Christian ministry, and a grand-daughter, the wife of an honored, esteemed missionary among the Choctaws, for twenty-five years, (Rev. Mr. Hotchkins); two great-grandsons in the ministry, and two in a course of preparation, and one great-great-grandson, already in the ministry, (Rev. Willard Richardson,) and although of another name, yet a name inherited from one of the original members of this Church, who bears and sustains the same relation to the first pastor of this Church, which he sustained to Rev. Peter Thacher, of Salisbury, England, and would have been a valuable delegate to this meeting, as the representative of a generation yet in its infancy, and a pledge that our hopes of future generations will not be disappointed.

Mr. Thacher was a graduate of Harvard University,

*It is a tradition in the family, that he was the 14th eldest son, who entered the ministry in succession, but if he was not, it will appear that if there is any virtue in the name *Peter*, this Church is fairly entitled to its share.

in the class of 1737, and although but one sermon of his was published during his ministry, yet from the volume published since his decease, and the sermons preserved in their original form among his descendants, and from other sources, we are assured that his literary and theological character was highly respectable and praiseworthy. He was the minister of the parish forty years, and was finally laid aside by a stroke of paralysis, and his grave is with us. Many besides his numerous descendants, are called upon to rise up and call him blessed ; to praise and bless the goodness of God in his settlement among this people, as an ascension gift, from the great Head of the Church to them. Soon after his settlement, he was married to Bethiah, daughter of Deacon Obadiah Carpenter, whose descendants are equally distinguished for numbers and piety.

During the ministry of Mr. T., much attention was paid to the rite of infant baptism, and a large proportion of the children of the Church received the seal of the covenant at his hands ; a few of whom are now with us, and one, a member of this Church, who was baptized ninety-one years ago last October.*

From the organization of the Church, until 1780, but few additions were received, showing the baneful effects of civil commotions and wars upon the spiritual interests of a people. The year 1780 forms an important period in its history, and although larger numbers have been added at other times, yet probably none more important to its prosperity and success. Of the additions then made, only one remains, having enjoyed a visible relation to the Church sixty-eight years.†

Soon after this, the pastor was laid aside by a stroke of paralysis, which caused his death ; and praise would we offer to his memory, while peace would we invoke

* Mrs. Mercy Everett, daughter of Mr. Andrew Starkey, and mother of Mr. Daniel Babcock.

† Miss Deborah Starkey.

to his ashes, for to his ministerial services in this parish, are patriotism and education, morality and piety, greatly indebted. By instruction in the school and personal addresses, in addition to those of catechetical exercises and the public discourse, did he labor to promote the intellectual, moral and religious good of the people committed to his charge, and these services should be held in high admiration, especially when it is understood that the whole parish was divided into school districts not numbering more than two or three,* and that old Harvard stood almost alone in her efforts to raise up educated and pious men for the service of the country, and the people were called to pass through those mighty struggles which severed the colonies from England.

In 1793, Rev. Ebenezer Lazell, of Bridgwater, and a graduate of Brown University, was ordained pastor of this Church, but his ministry was too short, (less than five years,) to be very marked in its results upon the character, either of the Church or parish. Soon after his settlement, he was married to Miss Chloe, daughter of Mr. Abiathar Richardson, and both removed to the State of N. York, and have since deceased. During this period, the nation enjoying peace at home and with foreign nations, there was a great disposition on the part of the inhabitants of this parish, to leave their homes and seek for settlements in sections of the country, where land was more productive, and at the same time less expensive. Accordingly, many went into those districts and sections that were comparatively new, and apparently believing what has since proved true, that "Westward the star of empire takes its way;" a large proportion of those who left, took their course

* The parish is now divided into ten school districts, with a fund, bequeathed as a legacy, by Mr. Abiathar A. Richardson, of \$11,000, under the control of a Board of Trustees, chosen annually by the parish, the officers of which Board for the present year, consist of Mr. Samuel Carpenter, Pres., J. Daggett, Esq., Sec., and Mr. Elias Fuller, Treasurer. The districts number this year, 404 scholars, between four and sixteen, and each scholar draws from the treasury of the town, \$2 per annum, at least, and in the small districts more.

towards the setting sun. Of these, an interesting group, known originally as the "nine partners," settled near the banks of the Susquehanna, in the State of Pennsylvania.

While this policy may have proved highly beneficial to the new settlements, it made no small draught upon the strength and resources of the Church and parish, so that, at the commencement of the present century, the Church was very small, and the parish was known in town rather as the *precinct*, a designation inherited with less significancy, than the appellations "Down East," or "Far West."

At this low state of Church and parish, Rev. Nathan Holman, of Sutton, was ordained (Oct. 15, 1800) as their third pastor and minister, and his settlement was under auspicious circumstances, being attended with an interesting revival of religion, which secured an increase of strength and of numbers to the Church. With this increase, however, the Church did not acquire that ascendancy and control in the moral and religious affairs of the parish, necessary to her stability and success. The years following are thus marked upon her records, as years of great spiritual dearth and leanness.

This declension continued till 1815, when God proved his love to this people, by a gracious and powerful work of divine grace, which added to the Church more than one hundred. (B.)

This work not only caused the good seed that had been long sown, to spring up and give promise of much fruit, but revealed the alarming extent to which the enemy had sown his tares. Upon this accession of strength and numbers, came a struggle for ascendancy; truth or error, good and sound morals, or hateful and vile practices and customs. The form which the struggle assumed, was that of Christian doctrine in the garb and under the name of Universalism. Happily for us, the Church came out of the conflict as gold tried in

the fire, harmonious and united, losing only one member from her communion, and witnessing the power and beauty of her doctrines and ordinances to cause a change in the outward morals, and to control the habits and customs of a people, which, to the surviving actors, must appear more like a dream than a reality.

What the parish was, previous to 1815, in its morals and piety, contrasted with the scene as presented to day, furnishes a sketch that a master hand might well covet, and we leave it with the single remark, that it had gained a remarkable notoriety for horse-racing, card-playing, and similar vices, that were patronized by the lovers of iniquity far and near, and were allowed in all their corrupting, debasing and destroying effects upon the children and youth. The scathing, withering, blasting effects of the habits and customs then in vogue, are registered in the history of families that sustained them, in the tastes and moral sensibilities of children, if not children's children. As a streak of light to relieve this gloomy picture, it may be stated, that then the mechanical and manufacturing establishments in town commenced their operations, by means of which, the gentle stream that waters our meadows has been made tributary to the enterprise of the parish, and has yielded a rich revenue to the wealth and resources of the town. While they have proved that immorality is no more necessarily connected with the loom and spindles than with the plough and spade, so, also, have they furnished the means of support to an increased population within our limits, and have added a relative value to the other sections of the parish. In this enterprise, the names of Ebenezer Tyler and Elijah Ingraham, will stand foremost; afterwards associated with the manufactures and prosperity of Pawtucket, and the political interests of the Commonwealth in its Senate chamber.

The revival of 1815 enabled the Church to give five of her youthful sons to the work of the gospel minis-

try, four of whom are now living, while the fifth fell into an early and premature grave, as the youthful, but beloved and esteemed pastor of the Congregational Church in Palmer, of his native State, (Rev. Henry H. F. Sweet, son of Henry Sweet.)

Soon after this, the pastor was led to ask for a dismissal from his charge, and with great reluctance on the part of the Church and parish, his request was granted, and he was dismissed by an Ecclesiastical Council, in 1821. After his dismissal, he was called to supply vacant pulpits in the vicinity, but chose to make his home with this people, where he had witnessed such precious results to his labors, and to make his grave in the midst of those to whom he had ministered the word and ordinances of God. His grave is with us, with an expressive motto upon its neat and chaste monument,—“Look to God,” whereby though dead, he yet speaketh. Rev. Mr. Holman was married early in his ministry to a daughter of Mr. Samuel Morey, of Norton, who was his companion more than forty years, and soon followed him to the grave. He was a graduate of Brown University, in the class of 1794, and in addition to printed discourses, has bequeathed the place of his studies and prayers, of pastoral anxiety, conference and care, to those who can cherish its tender associations, and delight in ascriptions of honor to his name, as their glory.

The next pastor was the Rev. John Ferguson, who was ordained in 1822. The period of his ministry was blessed with repeated additions to the Church, both as to membership and piety, and marked the commencement of that system, now in successful operation, of support to the various benevolent enterprises of the day, and of aid to the labors of parents and pastors, by a judicious and careful education of children in Sabbath schools, and maternal associations. Although the ministry of Mr. Ferguson was limited to the short term of thirteen years, yet it secured the strength and

ability of his riper years, and was of great value in the administration of wise and judicious measures, and discipline. (The presence of Mr. Ferguson, at the time this discourse was delivered, rendered it unnecessary that other remarks should be added. Since his dismissal, he has labored in the ministry, in the towns of Whately and Lanesboro', and is now successfully employed by the American Tract Society, for the State of New Hampshire, and in his life of Dr. Hopkins, has given a pleasing specimen of his taste and power as a writer.)

At this favorable period, was the present pastor ordained (Oct. 20th, 1836,) and during the time of his ministry, the Church has enjoyed peace and external prosperity. To give a brief view of the Church in her present state and condition, it may not be improper to mention some statistical facts which have come within the range of his observations and labors. As to the membership of the Church during that period, the number of additions, by certificate, is nearly balanced by the number of dismissals with letter, and for an increase of members and for a supply of vacancies produced by death, we have been obliged to depend upon additions by profession, which have averaged nearly nine per annum, while the number of vacancies by death has not been more than four per annum, thus showing not only an actual increase of members, through the unmerited goodness of God, but an indebtedness to a kind providence for a preservation from any special diseases, to thin our ranks. To this providence must we ascribe the interesting fact, that during the period of twelve years, only seven male members have died, the average of whose ages was sixty-nine years, and with the exception of one, who died young, seventy-six years; and also, that there are now in the Church more than forty members, the average of whose ages is more than three score and ten, sixteen of whom average at least eighty years, and

nine in their eightieth year or upwards, eighty-four years. Although from this class much active labor cannot be expected, yet in a variety of methods their preservation may be accounted as a blessing, not the least of which, we hope will be seen in the hopeful piety and extensive usefulness of many, who, like Timothy, may profess the unfeigned faith that dwelt in their grandmothers, and having known the scriptures from childhood, become able teachers of the same. While their presence among us is esteemed to be a great blessing, it claims also sympathy and kindness, for they have passed the limit fixed to human life, and are fast passing away. It is to the speaker a fact of peculiar solemnity, that while the number of funerals at which he has been called to officiate cannot vary much from two hundred and fifty, only one of the whole number arrived to the age of a century, and that funeral was upon a day, when a severe storm of snow with the cold winds not only rendered the greatest perseverance necessary on our part for an attendance, but seemed to have conspired with the frosts to deny to friends an affectionate token of respect to the aged, who had outlived their generation and almost themselves. With an increase of membership, has there been an increase of regular attendants upon the public services of the Sabbath. The Sabbath School, justly styled the nursery of the Church, has been highly prospered, reporting last spring, more than three hundred members, under the superintendence of Mr. Jesse Carpenter. As a favorable sign, it may also be mentioned, that of more than one hundred marriages, solemnized by the present pastor, not more than two or three were graced with wine or any intoxicating drink, and that early in the history of total abstinence societies, there were at least five hundred pledged members in the parish. This we regard as a good omen to the Church, for temperance is no less a harbinger or pioneer, than a component part of good morals and Christian piety.

The charity of the Church has not failed, but the streams of her Christian beneficence have flowed annually and regularly for the benefit of a dying race, and if they have not been as large as those of more wealthy Churches, or the gospel demands, yet we believe they have aided to swell that tide of benevolence which seeks to benefit, bless and save a world in ruins.

More than thirty years has the Cent Society, formed among the ladies, pursued the even tenor of its way, with a silent and noiseless step, furnishing last year more than \$40, as a proof of valued and faithful members, which, with the products of their sewing circle and annual contributions from the congregation, has gone to aid in the cultivation of the rich and promising field of Home Missions, embracing the destitute districts of Massachusetts, with other sections of our country.

The Monthly Concert has furnished with its prayers a regular contribution that has gone, with a regular collection in the congregation, to aid the man of God who is called to stand upon foreign shores, and as God's ambassador, to teach idolatrous nations the way of life and salvation.

The flight of the angel, seen by the beloved disciple in apocalyptic vision, having the everlasting gospel to preach to the nations, has been watched in his progress and triumphs, and although Babylon has not yet fallen, yet with our sympathies and prayers have gone our contributions and efforts, to keep the Bible as the Christian's talisman in all our houses, and to give it unsealed and untrammelled to all nations, and, as auxiliaries, to furnish the little tracts, those "swift winged messengers of the mind," and the leaves of the tree that yielded her fruit monthly to every family, and to assist the hardy Colporteur, who needs a supply for his temporal wants, (being composed of flesh and blood like ourselves,) as he knocks at the doors and hearts of men, in the name of his God and Saviour, for

a reception and acknowledgement of its hopes and promises.

The student, with his purse-stricken and care-worn labors, in his struggles, amid privations and want, to qualify himself for the Christian ministry, and the mariner upon the briny deep, have not been forgotten; and for years have the young ladies of this congregation, with their needles, worked for the noble hearted tarpaulin, and I doubt not, many a noble tar would have felt his burden removed and his heart exhilarated, if he could have seen the pleasantness of their monthly meetings, and witnessed their sympathy in his trials and misfortunes.

Perhaps enough has been said to show the general interest which has existed for institutions of Christian benevolence, without any particular reference to the cause of peace or anti-slavery, or Sabbath schools, with the erection of houses of religious worship, and the claims of our Western colleges, for all of which, we doubt not, more regular and substantial aid would have been rendered, if it could be said of all, as our Saviour said of the woman who anointed his head with ointment of spikenard, "She hath done what she could."

With this brief sketch of the origin and history of this church, it cannot be deemed impertinent that we should speak of its beneficial influence. As to the happy influence of the church, it may be mentioned, to her credit, that she has lived for a century, and, like those planted in the house of the Lord, flourishes in the courts of our God, numbering upon her lists the youthful and fair, presenting a picture of the lights and shadows of human life, uniting in her communion, the smiling, lovely expression of youth, in bold contrast with the wrinkled cheek and feeble step of infirm old age. The term of her existence we should judge to be sufficiently long, for a trial of the comparative value of God's word and ordinances, with the word and institutions of men.

During the year that preceded the organization of the church, some of its original members made written acknowledgments of their sin and guilt, incurred by their presence at the house of ———, (names having passed away entirely from the knowledge of the people, need not be mentioned,) where there was a number of “vain persons, in the exercise of vain sports,” to teach us, that there have been from the beginning those who loved vanity, and could choose folly. If occasions have existed for similar confessions from members of the church, its records do not show; but evidence is not deficient to prove, that vain persons have been raised up in sad succession; yet who is prepared to defend their principles, or their manner of life, as contrasted with the professors of our holy religion, and what sober, candid person, feels constrained to pronounce an eulogium upon their memory, or seriously thinks that it is due from society to make some public acknowledgment for services rendered by those who provided for their entertainment, even though at an expense of nightly toil and labor?

To the retributions of a just and merciful God would we leave those who have turned away from the paths of wisdom and piety, and account it as evidence in favor of the church, that she has been preserved, with a prospect of increasing strength and usefulness, especially when we learn the nature of the evils from without to which she has been exposed, and from which, has suffered; and the silent, but no less pernicious and deceptive opposition of the natural heart. That the church has continued for a century requiring assent to her doctrines and written relations, that contain marked evidences of a change of heart, by the Holy Ghost, is proof that there has been a vital power lodged with her, to enliven the zeal and increase the strength of her members. While this result is sufficient to compensate for the labor and expense necessary to support her ordinances and institutions, yet has

there gone forth a spreading, reviving, and purifying power, the effect of which can be read in the history of other towns, and can be seen to its full extent, only by an Omniscient eye.

For evidence of some direct good, we would refer to the fact, that of the direct descendants from those who formed the church by a solemn covenant, at least thirteen are known among the churches as living ministers of the gospel, and three others are in a course of preparation for the same work. While the scene thus presented interests our hearts, additional pleasure is derived from the assurance that they hold to Jesus Christ as the living head, and preach him as the power and wisdom of God unto salvation.

From the living ministry, we can turn to the history of other churches for evidence, that this church has not lived in vain. Not to speak of all who have removed to other towns, from many of whom gratifying accounts have returned of their active service for Christ and his church, it is our privilege to quote from printed documents of churches that are ready to show their respect and attachment by delegations on this occasion: a respect which we would reciprocate with emotions of gratitude and joy.

Says the Rev. Mr. Miller, the highly valued and esteemed pastor of the Congregational Church, at Harford, Pa., in a printed sermon,—“A church was organized, June 13, 1800, by Rev. Jedediah Chapman, a missionary, from N.J. It consisted of seven members, viz., Obadiah Carpenter, and his wife Ama, John Tyler, and his wife Mary, John Thacher, Mercy Carpenter, wife of Obadiah Carpenter, Jun., and Miss Mary Thacher, all having letters from the Congregational Church in Attleborough, of which Rev. Peter Thacher was pastor; and ‘soon afterwards’ the church declared themselves to be of the Congregational order, and voted that the Confession of Faith of the Second Church of Christ in Attleboro’, and Covenant, together

with the Cambridge Platform, be the rule of their faith and discipline." In 1806, this was exchanged for one more brief.

When the original founders of that church, the hardy pioneers, left their paternal homes, more than half a century since, much solicitude and anxiety were experienced for their welfare and prosperity, going like Joseph, far, far away from kindred and friends ; but now that anxiety and solicitude are turned into joy, as the distance is reduced from a month's hard travel, to that of less than two days ; and the little church, planted in a new soil, has grown so luxuriantly, that in place of one it has become four bands, while colonies from it have gone as far as Illinois, to enlarge the borders of our Zion, having received to its communion probably not less than five hundred members. Looking at this church, brought so near to us with its three branches, sustaining the regular ministrations of God's word and ordinances, having been served by ten deacons and two pastors, we can but bid her God speed, and pray that "*the* little one may become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation."

One of the causes for such rapid growth and prosperity is to be found, doubtless, in the recorded statement, that "since the organization of the church, public worship has been held, on every Sabbath, except perhaps four, when storms of remarkable severity, or other extraordinary reason prevented."

To this certified attestation of the virtue that has gone forth from this church, may be added the following extract from a preface to the Articles of Faith and Covenant of the Congregational Church, Pawtucket:—

"The Pawtucket Congregational Church was originally composed of but nine members, one male and eight females. All these were members of the church, in Attleboro', under the pastoral care of Rev. Mr. Ferguson. In April, 1829, they were dismissed from that church, with Christian affection and commendation.

for the purpose of being organized into a distinct branch of the Christian Church, to be located in the village of Pawtucket. That purpose was effectuated by a regularly convened ecclesiastical council, on the 17th of the above month."

Although it may be deemed superfluous, yet would we attest our deep sincere respect for the wisdom and judgment of those who planned and executed the erection of their commodious and commanding house of worship, which has stood for twenty years, with its noble front and open doors, facing the land of Roger Williams, to welcome the return of any who may have felt as though they were exiles from the religious customs and usages of their fathers; and also for that enlightened piety and faith, which prayed for, and sought, the formation of a Congregational Church, for if but one male member* was ready to enter its fold, yet, in anticipation of the decision of succeeding generations, the measure has received the verdict of an enlightened public, and a seal of approbation from those whose presence, countenance, and aid were necessary to its success, having received to its communion more than four hundred members. Located almost side by side, our prayer is, that this church and theirs may always cultivate the same fraternal harmony and union which now blends them so beautifully together, and that the only provocation between them shall be to love and good works.

Already has that church sent forth a noble colony, which has planted a church of the same order, in the adjoining village, near to the supposed place where resided, and was buried, Blackstone, the first inhabitant, within the original bounds of Attleboro', and who, though a regular clergyman of the Established Church of England, proved himself a regular Independent, ranked by Mather, "among the godly Episcopalians,

* Deacon Remember Carpenter, a name that will long be remembered, as endeared to the friends of truth and piety.

but of a particular humor, and would never join any of our churches, giving this reason for it,—I came from England, because I did not like the lord bishops ; but I can't join with you, because I would not be under the lord brethren."* For this branch from the church at Pawtucket, we can entertain no other than the most cordial sympathy and lively interest, hoping and believing that no one will be suffered to take from them their crown, and that their faith will look to the power of God, rather than to the wisdom of man.

These are some of the sources from which our evidence is derived, that God has granted some success to the faith and piety of the members of this church. Other considerations might be presented, proving the influence of the church, in the general utility of her forms of faith for the great purposes of education, morality, and piety, and the happy, pleasant effects of her forms of ecclesiastical polity, for the promotion of peaceful order and republican simplicity in civil society. For illustration of this general utility, we would refer to the first plantation at Rehoboth, which lived a year, without any jurisdiction, either from Massachusetts or Plymouth colonies, and also to that colony which went from this parish and settled in the forests of Pennsylvania.

Of the original settlement at Harford, says Rev. Mr. Miller, "The early settlers were characterized by industry, frugality, morality, and mutual kind feeling. Hardly distinguished in interest, or employment, or temporal circumstances, they found at each other's rude cabins a homely but cordial entertainment. Remote from public roads, and, I had almost said, from the rest of the world, they knew little of political agitations, or of any general occasion of excitement.

* Of Blackstone, Dr. Snow, in his History of Boston, makes the following statement :—Though he was far from agreeing with Roger Williams, he used frequently to go to Providence to preach the gospel, and to encourage his younger hearers ; while he gratified his own benevolent disposition, he would give them of his apples, which were the first they ever saw.

The State, on whose soil they dwelt, appeared not to claim them as part of its members, or to extend over them the folds of its civil government. For nearly ten years they were left without taxes or military duties, without rulers or civil authority. A sense of justice, the dictates of kindness, the power of moral training, and of public opinion, were their officers and executors."

That our views may not be deemed visionary, or suspected of partisan character, let foreign travellers speak, whose names are a sufficient endorsement for the honesty, if not the justice, of these opinions. Says Von Raumer, "No where in the world does there exist such a universal, finished, and, withal, quiet democracy as in New England." Says De Tocqueville, "We find, in the laws of New England, the germ and gradual development of that township Independence, which is the life and mainspring of American liberty at the present day. And it is not the administration, but the political effects of the local system, that I admire most in America."

Where is the type, the model of this "township Independence," but in our churches, and what causes are more powerful to secure the "political effects of our local system," than these? That we may be relieved from the charge of sectarianism, that bugbear and phantom used to frighten the friends of truth, I would quote an extract from Hon. Mr. Bancroft, in his *History of the United States* (vol. 2, p. 413.) "To advance intellectual freedom, Calvinism denied, absolutely denied the sacrament of ordination, thus breaking up the great monopoly of priestcraft, and scattering the ranks of superstition.

"To secure a life in the public mind, in Geneva, in Scotland, wherever it gained dominion, it invoked intelligence for the people, and in every parish planted the common school. In an age of commerce, to stamp its influence on the new world, it went on board the fleet of Winthrop, and was wafted to the bay of Mas-

sachusetts. Is it denied, that events follow principles, that mind rules the world? The institutions of Massachusetts were the exact counterpart of its religious system."

If in any section of New England such declarations can find a ready, hearty response, it must be on soil that was sheltered and defended by the Old Plymouth Colony; for, while that colony never subjected itself to the reproach of religious intolerance and persecution, neither has it been obliged to appeal to the thundering cannon for the protection of "law and order," so that while the original limits of old Rehoboth could furnish a retreat for Roger Williams, in his banishment from Massachusetts Bay, it has also yielded a safe asylum for the late fugitives from the laws of Rhode Island.*

Upon our civil society, in its laws and cardinal features may be seen the legitimate effect of our modes of faith and ecclesiastical polity, both of which are necessary for a symmetrical proportion and harmony in the heart and life; and how can we do otherwise than turn to them, with a stronger, deeper attachment, especially when we find that drivelling, grovelling, selfish beings can seek to hide themselves within the folds of Christian rites and ceremonies, and the political convulsions of earth reveal a want which these are designed to supply? As if to defend and establish our position at every point, we learn the interesting fact, that the same man who negotiated for the original purchase of Attleborough, as a plantation of Rehoboth, was employed to negotiate between England and Holland, for the New Netherlands; and so great was his practical wisdom, that the City of New York saw fit to elect Thomas Willett as its first mayor; while his grave, he chose should be in Rehoboth. One of the first acts of the colony of New Netherlands, after its

* During the recent excitement upon the question of free suffrage in R. I., Providence was placed under martial law, and the roar of the cannon was heard in this town daily for weeks, and in our different towns along the line were men of the Free Suffrage party, who had fled as for their lives.

transfer to England, although its first settlers were Dutch and Calvinists, (without our form of ecclesiastical polity,) was to frame and establish certain churches and ministers, and, that "the act might not be construed too narrowly, it was declared that the vestrymen and church-wardens of the church established in New York, might call a Protestant Dissenting minister," a privilege which our Congregational Churches never asked of England or her agents, supposing it was not theirs to bestow.

Approving the modes of faith and ecclesiastical polity of our fathers, shall we censure their usages and regulations? Not in the least, as to their taste in dress, or architecture, and other things that might be mentioned, when we remember that they were ready to leave merry old England only when its merriment knew no conscience or law higher than self-gratification, for the privations and trials of the wilderness, which were to be endured rather than chosen,—submitted to rather than courted. If our fathers could worship God in plain dwellings, without cushioned pews, or painted doors and mahogany pulpits, without an excess of apparel or heat, to smother their zeal and deaden their life blood, and make use of the postilion and horse block, (while the strong must walk, and carry the musket for protection from savage violence,) what must we think of their children, if, laden with the stores of a bountiful Providence, they become negligent and slothful, in the peaceful possession of their civil and religious institutions.*

While, then, with true filial affection we would shield the reputation of our fathers, and, if necessary, hide a father's faults, yet history has given notoriety to one feature, in the early religious history of Rehoboth, which we would gladly expunge, and omit on

* A want of proper ventilation for our houses of religious worship, was an evil to which the fathers were not exposed, from a disuse of stoves, but which can be remedied with a little care or expense, and should be, for the benefit of speakers and hearers.

this occasion, were it not that History, to be profitable, must be impartial, and to be instructive, must be true.

Says Mr. Baylies, "At this period, (soon after the establishment of the colonies) so much indifference as to the support of the clergy was manifested in Plymouth colony, as to excite the alarm of the other confederated colonies. The complaint of Massachusetts against Plymouth on this subject, was laid before the commissioners, and drew from them a severe reprehension. Rehoboth had been afflicted with a severe schism, and by its proximity to Providence and its plantations, where there was a universal toleration, the practice of free inquiry was encouraged, and principle, fancy, whim and conscience, all conspired to lessen the veneration for ecclesiastical authority. In Sept. 1658, it was agreed that there shall be a town meeting this fortnight, and in case it appear that any person or persons be behind with Mr. Newman, that then some effectual course may be taken, according to court order, to make such to pay as have been negligent of their duty, for the settling of Mr. Newman amongst us. In 1671 it was voted, Mr. Newman's salary had not been paid, that there shall be a trial, made by contributions on every Sabbath."

In this parish, as late as 1780, we find, as a condition upon which places in their house of worship for pews could be bought by those not living in the parish, that the buyers and those to whom the pews should go, should pay their legal proportion towards supporting the gospel in this place, and for further repairs and all necessary charges.

These are the facts, and as they pertain to ecclesiastical authority, we would speak with becoming diffidence. The effect of the course adopted in the above votes, must have been to lessen ecclesiastical authority, or ministerial influence. That such was not intended, we honestly believe; for if the fathers were jealous of any influence which they conceived to be prejudicial

to the interests of the colony, it was that which tended to lessen ecclesiastical authority. In their measures to relieve the difficulty, as we humbly conceive, they promoted the evil they would cure, and fanned the flame they would extinguish. The secret of the whole trouble, we apprehend, consisted not in a proximity to Providence, any more than to the Atlantic, but in a mistaken view of duty. With the belief that all who enjoyed the benefit of Christian institutions, should pay their just proportion for their support, they adopted measures not to square the accounts and relieve the ministry, but to bring the whole weight of ecclesiastical authority to bear with as much pressure as possible upon the sense of justice, and love of reputation, and good fame of the delinquents, and thus arraying covetousness, whim, and a perverted conscience, against the ministry. That our fathers were willing to aid in the support of the ministry cannot be doubted, for they could take the spoiling of their goods and estates joyfully when conscience demanded, but to pay a single penny or mill which had been assessed as a lawful tax upon others, was to sacrifice conscience and wound justice. The funds of the parishes within the original limits of Rehoboth, are sufficient to hold the fathers harmless, while the history of those funds would form a chapter we must leave to others. This is only one of the deliriums of that nice faculty, which sometimes leads men not merely to do justly, if the heavens fall, but as another has said, that the heavens may fall.

So disastrous was the effect of this policy upon Rehoboth, that if its churches had not been founded upon something more valuable than political expediency, or selfish gratification, they would have been numbered with the things that were, but are not ; and the ministry would have sought refuge in itineracy, as the best, if not only mode of usefulness and success. So far as mere personal opinion may avail, a jealousy

for ministerial influence and respect, and true ecclesiastical authority, would induce us to say that those churches and parishes would have done well if they had never allowed ministerial influence or ecclesiastical authority to come in collision with the covetousness, or whims, or consciences of men, upon the subject of pecuniary support; for while they were obliged to contend, at an expense of great loss, without any prospect of gain, so on the other hand, if necessity required they had taken the spoiling of their goods, they would have saved the tenderest, most sacred feelings of a minister's heart, and in the most effectual manner have advanced the interests of the kingdom of our Redeemer, who said for our encouragement,—“Whosoever receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.” Let the brethren who could shoulder the musket to protect the people from savage violence, take also the sword of the spirit, and with it battle valiantly for truth and righteousness, rather than, for the name and credit of a learned and talented ministry, be obliged to turn that ministry into the market, as a system of brokerage, by which a few pence can be saved, and compel it to go in vain from street to street for the domestic comforts and articles of ordinary life.

In justice to Rehoboth upon this subject, I would quote the authority of the *Magnalia*. Says Mather of Mr. Newman, “How many *straits* he underwent at *Rehoboth*, in the *dark day* when he was almost the only minister whose *invincible patience* held out under the scandalous neglect and contempt of the ministry, which the whole colony of *Plymouth* was for a while bewitched with, it is best known unto the compassionate Lord, who said unto him, *I know thy works, and how thou hast borne and hast patience, and for my name's sake, hast labored, and hast not fainted.*”

From this necessarily brief sketch of the origin, history, and influence of the Church of Christ in this

parish, what more natural conclusions can we derive, than that godliness is profitable for the life that now is, and that God will succeed, and bless the labors of his covenanted people. When the statistics of our church tell us, that the three ex-pastors who have deceased, averaged the period of three score and ten ; and also that of the fourteen deacons who have been called to serve this, with other churches, the same can be said, what other inference can we adopt than that in the habits of sobriety, frugality, truth, and benevolence, which godliness is designed to secure, it tends to preserve and save natural life, as truly as that it is designed to confer upon man the life that is spiritual and eternal.

No less clear and manifest is the inference that God will succeed and bless the labors of his covenanted people. If, of the baptized children of this church, numbering more than one thousand, the history of those who lived to adult years could be traced, what pleasing evidence would be furnished of the fulfilment of God's precious promises ! About ten years since, there was an aged disciple* permitted to commune with us, around this table, over whose head seventy-one winters had passed since he was received into the church upon profession of his faith, by Rev. Mr. Thacher, and was joined by the representatives of three successive generations from himself ; thus combining in themselves four successive generations ; giving convincing evidence that the word of promise was sure. But why should we detain you with a recital of such facts and incidents, when the history of our churches is fraught with similar scenes and events, to confirm our faith and elevate our hope ?

Leaving, then, the churches and parishes lineally connected with this, six of whom are its branches, and with it completing the number of churches the beloved disciple saw in vision, as seven golden candle-

* Deacon Ezekiel Kent.

sticks, having one in their midst, like unto the son of man, to the Christian advice and pastoral watch and care of those who are called to be their pastors and teachers, I would conclude, with a brief exhortation to the members of this Church.

If to those who covenanted in this place a century since to be the Lord's, were committed solemn trusts, and great responsibilities,—no less solemn trusts are now committed to you, to preserve the Institutions of our holy religion for succeeding generations, and, in the spirit of a Puritan ancestry, to pledge to Christ, and the interests of his Kingdom, your fortunes, your sacred honors, and your lives. The political clouds that hung over your fathers have passed away, the sky over our heads is clear, and never was a people called to enjoy a better heritage, or labor with a more sure prospect of success, than those of old Plymouth Colony. While, then, you may rejoice that you have been counted worthy of such an heritage, and are permitted to stand in your lot, let not a false modesty lead you to bury your talents, but ever remember that you have enlisted in the service of one, who is mightier than the sons of earth, whose sword is upon his thigh, and whose progress is only from conquest to conquest, and from victory to victory. If ever such counsel was needed, certainly it must be at the period in which we live, when men not only transmit their thoughts by lightning, but when the sanctuary of the dead, with all its sacred and tender associations, must give place for the iron horse, whose rumbling wheels and terrific screech remind us of the march of mind, and teach us, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."*

Enjoying the free air and light of Christian truth, with free institutions, why should any shrink from

* The Boston and Providence Railroad passes within a few rods of the meeting-house, and through the graveyard adjoining, so that a large proportion, if not a majority of its graves were removed for its accommodation.

those responsibilities which piety may consistently ask, or neglect any duty, social or relative, that justice and benevolence may require. Christian modesty is no less removed from that rude and boisterous spirit that knows no refinement, and cannot brook the least restraint or reform, than from that rapid, puny, spindling growth, which is the product of a regular stereotyped system of means and measures, and consists in a willingness to learn, judge and decide, as to all truth and duty, and a frank, fearless discharge of all the services and labors they may require at our hands.

To the members of this Church, the occasion speaks in accents not to be mistaken,—act worthy of an honored ancestry:—of your own sentiments, and Christian belief, and, within the circle of your sympathies, charities and prayers, embrace a world in ruins, a world for which a Saviour bled and died, a world to be saved or lost.

If any one should feel disposed to point to our fields, comparatively sterile, and our retirement from the marts of business and the busy crowd, as a reason for Christian imbecility and inaction, let him know, that rightly viewed, and correctly understood, these may be among our best instructors, to teach the necessity of wisdom and perseverance, the chief elements of excellence and success in any department or pursuit in life. To awaken the noblest emulation, and to inspire the brightest hopes, we would appeal to names familiar to your ears, names that belong to the town that gave them birth, and the country they served, in common with the families that honor themselves, by respect paid to the memory of the absent departed ones. Leaving it to others to recall names that have reflected credit upon the town of their nativity, by services in mercantile, or professional life, suffice it for our present purpose, that we may refer to a Daggett, who was a Professor of Divinity, in Yale College, for twenty-five years, and for eleven years, pre-

sided over its affairs:—to a Maxey, “who was the President of three Colleges, and was one of the most accomplished scholars, and pulpit orators, this country has produced”—to one, whose absence we deeply regret to day, aside from his distinguished personal worth, because of his cherished associations and sympathies with this Church, more than thirty years; and his name stands associated with those, whom not a few in New England love to cherish and honor.*

What is in the future, is known only to Him who seeth the end from the beginning; but of this we are assured, that while those who may arise to take our places, may review and decide upon our measures and labors, with the same freedom that has characterized the present effort; so with them must we all join that congregation which never grows less, and stand before that great white throne, from the sight of which heaven and earth fled away.

Let it be the part, both of pastor and people, to prepare on earth for a participation in that song which John heard, the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, sung by those who stood on a sea of glass, having golden harps, saying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy, for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.*

* Rev. Jacob Ide, D.D., of West Medway, the successor of Rev. David Sandford, son-in-law and biographer of Rev. Nathanael Emmons, D.D., of Franklin.

NOTE A.

The subjoined letters are presented in their original forms, with the signatures annexed, and with them the following persons united at the organization of the Church :—

Peter Thacher, from the Church in Middleboro', who thus became a member of the Church previous to his ordination as pastor ; (an example as to membership that has been followed by all his successors in office).

Jesiel Perry, Jr., Wm. Hutchins, David Hutchins, Rehoboth.

Wm. Dryer.

REQUEST.

To the Church of Christ in Attleborough, Grace,
Mercy, and Peace, be multiplied from God the
Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dearly Beloved :— Having a prospect (through the mercy of God) that the Gospel Ministry and Ordinances may be settled among us more conveniently than to attend with you, and for the more regular carrying on of the Affairs of Christ's Kingdom among us, it is our desire and design (by the help of God, and with your consent,) to Embody into a Church State, and come into a mutual Solemn Covenant and Oath, to serve the Lord God of our fathers, and by his grace and help, to walk with and before God, in all the Commands and Ordinances of the Lord, blameless.

Our request of you is, that you would allow us this Liberty, which we are the rather encouraged to ask of and hope from you, inasmuch as your affairs (through the Goodness of God) do not now necessarily call for our presence with you, and inasmuch as we think we have had your Countenance, or at least Indulgence, in our Proceedings hitherto. Brethren beloved, we most sincerely say we should gladly have continued with you, in the same Worship, under the same Roof. Yea, and we trust we are not separated from you, as to worship, though our Convenience calls us to attend Publick Ordinances in a distinct place ; we humbly hope we shall always remember with thankfulness to God and You, the sweet Counsells we have taken, while we have been walking together to the House of God, and the precious Entertainments we have there so often had ; and we hope still to have the benefit of your Prayers to God for us, for his gracious assistance in all our undertakings, and in Special, those we are now desirous of engaging in, that we may not be unfaithfull in God's Covenant, but glorific him here, and with you, together with the whole Church Catholick, enjoy him Eternally hereafter.

We hope, also, for your Pious and Friendly Endeavours of helpfulness,

as the Providence of God and our Future Circumstances may require aid—and our prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved.

We rest, Dear Brethren, Yours in the tenderest bonds of Duty and Affection.

Oct., 1748.

JOSEPH CAPRON and WIFE,
 JONATHAN WILMARTH and WIFE,
 THOMAS FRENCH and WIFE,
 STEPHEN WILMARTH,
 MARY FRENCH,
 ISHABOD PERRY,
 JOHN WILKINSON,
 ABRAHAM COMMING and WIFE,
 AARON CUTTING,
 NATHAN WILMARTH and WIFE,
 JOHN TIFFANY and WIFE,
 HENRY JOSLIN, Jr.,
 EDWARD FOSTER and WIFE,
 ELIZABETH LANE,
 ABIGAIL POWELL,
 OBADIAH CARPENTER and WIFE,
 JOSEPH BARRUS and WIFE,
 DANIEL PERRY and WIFE,
 HENRY JOSLIN,
 JONAS RICHARDSON,
 BETHIAH CARPENTER,
 THOMAS WILMARTH,
 ROBERT MARTIN and WIFE,
 REBECCA BROWN,
 WILLIAM BOLCOM and WIFE,
 DAVID PERRY and WIFE,
 SARAH JACKSON,
 JOHN TYLER and WIFE,
 JOSEPH BISHOP,
 DANIEL WILMARTH,
 HANNAH (the wife of Sam.) JACKSON,
 THOMAS SWEET and WIFE,
 LIDDIA (the wife of Wm.) LANE,
 JOHN SWEET and WIFE.

A N S W E R.

Attleborough, Nov. 26, 1748.

To the Brethren and Sisters of the Church of Christ,
 in Attleborough, East Precinct, who have applied
 to the Church for Dismission, in order to Embody
 in a Church State by themselves.

Dearly beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ:—Your Request has been laid before us by our Pastor, and we do hereby Signifie our hearty Compliance with it, adoring the Goodness of God towards you, in disposing and enclining your hearts to Settle and Support the Gospel and ordi-

nances of Jesus Christ among you, and in leading you to, and uniting you in, the Choice of a Pastor, which we apprehend to be one after God's own heart, and enclining Him to undertake the Pastoral Charge of you, and are ready to Concur with and assist you in His Solemn Separation to the Sacred work of the Gospel ministry.

We earnestly Desire the blessing of God to be upon you and your Elect Pastor, and that He would Succeed His preached Gospel and ordinances abundantly among you. We desire your prayers for us, and all that assistance we may at any time stand in need of from you.

And now, Dearly beloved, we Commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are Sanctified, through faith that is in Christ Jesus, and Rest your brethren in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel.

HABLAH WELD, Pastor:

In the Name and with the Consent of the Church.

NOTE B.

Extracts from a Sermon Preached in Attleborough, East Parish, Oct. 15th, 1820, by Rev. Nathan Holman.

When I came into this place, the Church and Society were considered as being in a very low state. Twenty years had passed away without any special attention to religion, and for eighteen years but nine members had been added. It might therefore be expected that the Church would be much reduced. This was found to be the case. There were then but forty-six members; fourteen males, five of whom lived in Rehoboth, and thirty-two females. Four of the male members had not for a number of years communed, or acted with the Church, and never did afterwards. Among the remaining ten, none were under fifty years, and some were very far advanced in life. Three died in a short time, and some others within a few years. In 1800, sixteen members were added to the Church, and in 1801, twenty-seven more; making, in the two years, forty-three. Twelve of these were males, and thirty-one females. Deducting for deaths and removals, the Church at the close of the year 1802 could not consist of more than eighty members. From this time to 1814, a period of twelve years, only twelve were added to the Church, three males and nine females. In these twelve years a considerable number died, and a greater number removed into other places, so that in 1814 there were but fifty members in the Church, eleven males, and thirty-nine females. This was a period of great declension, and abounding iniquity. Though under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Thacher, this people were applauded for the regularity of their habits and the morality of their lives, yet for the long period of about twenty years after he was taken off from his labors, to the year 1800, immoral practices had sprung up and become very prevalent. Gambling of almost every kind was much practised. Profane swearing had become quite fashionable among a certain class of the people, and the same class of people were seen so frequently at the taverns and grogshops, as to obtain the appellation of tavern-haunters; and although the revival of religion in 1800 and 1801 proved a check upon these practices, yet they were continued, in a greater or less degree, and

opposition was felt and expressed by a number, through the whole of the revival; and after the revival, as religion declined, iniquity abounded more and more.

In 1814, it seemed as though the plans of the wicked were systematized, and brought to perfection. The number of the Church had become small, and sinners were multiplied, and seemingly without check or control. Professors of religion were ready to despair—to think that the mercy of God was clean gone, and that religion would soon be removed from this place. More than a year had passed away, without a religious conference, or meeting for prayer. The like had not occurred before since the revival in 1800. Professors had become in a degree strangers to each other. They had much reason to believe that all were slumbering and sleeping together. But God was pleased, in great mercy, to interpose, and after the work of the Lord became visible, it was found that most of the members of the Church had been led to feel the deplorableness of our case, and to pray for a reformation for months before it was known to take place. Some time in the fall of 1814, a religious conference was appointed at the meeting-house, and was attended by a respectable number. It was then thought best, as the next was the week of our Lecture, not to have another conference under a fortnight, which it was agreed should be held in a private house. This proved to be the house where the first subjects of the reformation appeared. The conference then appointed was attended, and one every week after, during the reformation. For several weeks, however, but few males attended, and the prayers were all offered by the Pastor. Conference meetings were, for a number of weeks, met with the assembling of the irreligious the same week, and sometimes the same day. The day following one of them, there was a horse-race in the same direction of the religious meeting, which drew together a large number of men. The week following, the same day of the conference, there was a foot-race, which it was thought assembled at least two hundred people, men and boys. This, however, was a day of encouragement to the mourners in Zion. Five men, though not all members of the Church, attended the meeting. It was solemn and affectionate. Much tenderness of feeling was evident, and many tears were shed. In about ten days after this, a large ball which had been contemplated, and which was to have assembled most of our dear youth together, with others from the neighboring towns, was to have been attended. But seriousness was so impressed upon the minds of many, and the sudden death of Dea. Thacher occurring, and his funeral being attended the same day of the ball, influenced most of them to relinquish their object. Others attended the ball, but with the promise that they would never attend another, and it is to be hoped they never will, for they have been hopefully converted, and become regular members of the Church. From this time all vain amusements, and, as far as appeared, all gambling, was discontinued. The attention of all appeared to be more or less turned to the great subject of religion. The work gradually progressed, and continued for about two years. Many were brought to acknowledge the hand of God, which became more and more visible. No unusual means had been used, no new preachers had appeared among us, and no alarming providences had occurred. Yet the minds of the people were generally solemnized. The youth were disposed to forsake their vanities, and to pass by the place of their usual resort, to attend religious meetings. Had this taken place a year before, it might have been thought to be caused by the sickness and the deaths with which we were then visited. We had then more cases of fever, and

more deaths occasioned by fevers, than we had had for thirteen years before. Five died in one family. During the time of this sickness, which was a period of about seven months, more than thirty died in this parish; eight of whom were members of this Church. Yet during this distressing period, we have never had a season of greater stupidity. But at the commencement of the revival, it was a time of health and general prosperity. About the first of December I opened my house for all who were disposed to attend a religious conference on Sabbath evening. Not a large number attended the first evening, but the meeting was peculiarly joyful to some. At the following meetings the number constantly increased, until two large rooms were filled to overflowing. These meetings were continued regularly, in the cold season, for two years. In the warm season, we held our Sabbath evening conferences in the meeting-house, and generally the lower part of the house was well filled. These, together with the conferences on Wednesday before mentioned, were all the meetings we held, in addition to our usual meeting on the Sabbath. Our meetings were still and solemn. Many were made joyful in the house of prayer. Those who entertained a hope in the mercy of God, were free to relate their Christian experience, but nothing which had the appearance of enthusiasm or misguided zeal. Our meetings were seldom continued to the length of two hours. Christians were greatly animated, and appeared to enjoy the spirit of prayer. Great harmony prevailed, and we appeared to be united in love. No one regarded his time or his property, if by it he could advance the cause of religion. Whilst God was at work by his Spirit, almost every sermon and every religious effort was blessed to some. I spent much time in visiting from house to house, and was made welcome at every house, and every one appeared willing to relate the feelings of his heart. For the space of two years very little was said, except what related to the subject of religion. In view of what was passing before us, and what we felt in our own breasts, we were constrained to say, "This is the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes."

Our assemblies on the Lord's day, were much enlarged, especially on Communion days, on which occasion members were usually admitted. Storms, or bad travelling, made but very little difference. Upon the first Sabbath in March, 1815, the roads were in a very bad state, and under any other state of feeling than what then existed, would have been thought impassable. The snow had been very deep, and for a few days previous, the banks had been mellowed by a warm sun, and filled with water to an unusual depth. The morning was warm and foggy; yet the people pressed through the snow and water, some on horseback, some in wagons, and some on sleds drawn by large ox-teams; some in sleighs, some in chaises, and some on horse-sleds, until the meeting-house was well filled. The morning of the first Sabbath in May was rainy, yet every seat in the meeting-house was completely filled. On the first Sabbath in July, the weather was fair and pleasant. Many more attended the meeting than could be seated in the meeting-house. During both services, which were not less than two hours each, many stood upon their feet, and all were attentive and serious. The relations of those who hopefully experienced religion, were thought to be peculiarly scriptural, and truly Orthodox. For two years, we had no communion without one or more being added to the Church. Twenty-seven is the largest number added at any one time. The whole number added, since the commencement of the revival, is one hundred and thirty-four; thirty-nine males, and ninety-five females." Says one of the subjects of

that revival, One felt that his self-righteousness dropped from him at once, as a filthy garment, and as he stood naked before God, a Saviour, mighty to save, was revealed. Another clung to the works of the law, and was long distressed.

A pious father travelled some thirty miles to bring home an absent child, saying, "It is my duty to place my children where God is." Next day she attended a conference, and the thirtieth hymn, second book of Watts, was sung. She arose and sung the first and second stanzas with others. When they began the third,

" Let those refuse to sing,
Who never knew their God,"

she dropped upon her seat, and knew no more peace, till she found it in believing. She is now a mother in Israel.

POSTSCRIPT.

In accordance with a previous vote of the Church, a meeting was held Thursday, December 7th, 1848, in honor of the organization of the Second Congregational Church in Attleboro'. Nov. 30th, 1748, (the alteration in time made for convenience) when the preceding discourse was delivered, and public religious services were conducted, suitable to the occasion. According to letters missive, delegates were in attendance from the following Churches:—

The Congregational Church in Seekonk.

The First Church in Attleboro'.

The Congregational Church in Harford, Pa.

" " " in Pawtucket, Mass.

" " " in Central Falls, R. I.

So far as the season and personal engagements would permit, the sons of the Church from abroad united with us.

From letters received by the Committee of Arrangements, the following extracts may be quoted. Says Rev. A. Miller, in a letter dated Harford, Pa., Nov. 24th, 1848,—I have learned that Mr. S—— C—— has originated the plan of a "Sabbath exchange" between your Pastor and myself, soon after the New York and Erie Railroad shall be in operation to our vicinity, furnishing its facilities for comfortable and speedy journeying. That such a thing would ever be accomplished, and in such a way, was remote enough from the conceptions of our early settlers. Some of them came hither from Attleboro' on the ox-sleds, and were about four weeks on the way. And when a mother would visit the place of her nativity, she rode thither on horseback, with her daughter mounted behind her. I am highly gratified with the plan proposed. It would serve to keep alive the affectionate remembrances which exist. Mr. C—— will please to accept my acknowledgments, and, Providence permitting, he will find me ready at almost any time, when he would deem it best to move the matter. Says Rev. M. Thacher, in a letter dated, Virgil, Cortland Co., N. Y., Nov. 30th, 1848: I am acquainted with no Church, from which, considering its location, and the number of its constituent members, so many sons and daughters have emanated as from the Second Church in Attleboro'. Her descendants are found in almost all the Eastern, Middle, Western, and some of the Southern States. active members of various Churches, which they have been either

different forms of worship—their intolerance of other sects, which has subjected them to so much obloquy and reproach from those who have judged inconsiderately, and without making any allowance for the circumstances in which they were placed.

These facts will not, indeed, fully justify them—but they will palliate their errors—will, in a great measure, relieve the memory of pious and patriotic men from the shades which now rest upon it. It is not for us to judge them harshly. They were faithful and conscientious laborers in the cause of human progress—laying the foundations on which after-ages were to build. They were far in advance of the age in which they lived, in regard to civil freedom, and even to religious tolerance. It is not becoming in us to cast reproach upon those who lived in the day-break of a dark age,* for not seeing clearly all that we see in the more perfect day. In forming our judgment and passing sentence on their conduct, we should take into view their objects and motives of action. A more familiar acquaintance with their history—a better appreciation of their merits—a more candid and charitable consideration of their trials and motives of action—in fine, truth and historical justice will yet rescue the memory of the pilgrims from the injustice which has been done them.

This view of their position, did time permit, might be enlarged and illustrated; and it might also be shown that even the history† of their religious exclusiveness has been overstated and misrepresented.

Although the weather was very unfavorable, the attendance was good, clearly indicative of the interest generally felt in its occurrence, and its proceedings will be treasured up among the interesting events in the history of the parish.

* "That age," says Prince, "of low and universal bigotry which then prevailed in the English nation."

The pilgrims had then but just emerged from the darkness of that age. They became the pioneers of religious freedom in the new world.

† It will be seen by the early chronicles of Plymouth Colony, particularly by Edward Winslow's "Brief Narration," that the pilgrims of that colony were actuated by no bigoted spirit against other sects, and that many of the charges of intolerance preferred against them were unfounded.



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